



Reporting Our Progress in Caring for the Land and Serving People



Indigo Snake Restoration Project Wildlife, Fisheries and Natural Ecosystem Programs FY12012 Accomplishments Conecuh National Forest, Southern Region

State: Alabama

Congressional District: 2nd

Accomplishments:

- Released third cohort of 31, federally-listed indigo snakes into Conecuh National Forest;
- Prescribed burned over 25,000 acres of potential indigo habitat.

Forest Service Contribution: \$124,500

Partner Contribution: \$145K includes grants and in-kind contributions of partners for 2012

Project Costs: \$269,500

External Partners: Auburn University, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, The Orianne Society, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Zoo Atlanta, and the U.S. Department of Defense (Ft. Stewart).

Internal Partners: District Fire, Wildlife/Fisheries, Silviculture, Timber, Recreation and Planning Programs.

The Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) is a federally-listed species that had not been documented in Alabama for over 50 years. The thought of restoring the eastern indigo snake to Alabama and the Conecuh National Forest (CNF) has been an innovative undertaking as we build relationships with a diversity of partners makes this project even more rewarding. Each year the U.S. Department of Defense (Ft. Stewart) provided gravid females that were taken to Auburn University, where eggs were retrieved and incubated until hatched. Newly hatched snakes were then taken to Zoo Atlanta and reared there until they were about two feet long / two years old. Soon after they reach this age they are released. Since the spring of 2010 close to 90 indigo snakes have been released on the CNF. Half of the snakes released were equipped with tracking transmitters and all were outfitted

with pit tags to allow for individual identification. All snakes with transmitters are being tracked to determine survival and movements by Auburn University graduate students.

The role of the U.S. Forest Service has been to provide a quality, restored, longleaf pine/wiregrass ecosystem for indigo snakes through restoration management. This includes: timber harvests by thinning, removing off-site species, and prescribe burning.



An Indigo snake being released on release day 2012. Photo taken by: Mark Garner.



Indigo snakes basking in the sun outside of a gopher tortoise burrow just after a prescribed burn. Photo taken by: Sierra and Jimmy Stiles.